

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BILATERAL COMMUNICATIONS RELATIONSHIP: LIBYA-USA;
ICA COUNTRY PLAN PROPOSAL, FY 1979 AND FY 1980

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BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE "COMMUNICATIONS RELATIONSHIP" BETWEEN LIBYA AND THE UNITED STATES AT PRESENT LABORS UNDER AN ONEROUS DICHOTOMY: WHILE THE PRESENCE OF ALMOST 3,000 LIBYAN STUDENTS IN U.S. SCHOOLS AND AN EQUAL NUMBER OF U.S. GRADUATES HERE IN LIBYA SHOULD CONSTITUTE A NATURAL BRIDGE FOR AN EFFECTIVE BILATERAL DIALOGUE, THE CURRENT STATE OF U.S.-LIBYAN POLITICAL RELATIONS AND THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON THIS EMBASSY'S ACTIVITIES BY THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT, HINDER DEVELOPMENT OF A MUTUALLY PROFITABLE COMMUNICATIONS RELATIONSHIP. THE EMBASSY'S LONG AND SHORT TERM COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES, THEREFORE, ARE ORIENTED TOWARDS NARROWING THIS COMMUNICATIONS GAP AND TOWARDS ENCOURAGING AN ENVIRONMENT WHEREIN SOME EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INTERCHANGE BETWEEN LIBYA AND THE U.S. IS POSSIBLE. THE OBSTACLES CONFRONTING THIS TASK ARE CONSIDERABLE AND OUR PRESENT RESOURCES ARE SMALL, BUT THE EMBASSY FEELS THAT CONTINUED DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT FOR SOME BASIC ICA-RELATED ACTIVITIES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO AT LEAST THE PARTIAL REALIZATION OF THESE OBJECTIVES. END SUMMARY.

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1. PRIOR TO 1969, LIBYA AND THE UNITED STATES ENJOYED WARM CULTURAL AND POLITICAL TIES. WITH THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF ITS PETROLEUM RESOURCES IN THE 1960S, THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT PLACED INCREASING EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION AS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE THE TRAINED HUMAN TALENT NECESSARY TO EXPLOIT LIBYA'S ECONOMIC POTENTIAL.

2. AS A FORMER ITALIAN COLONY, LIBYA RETAINED A STRONG CULTURAL ATTACHMENT TO ITALY, ESPECIALLY AMONGST THE OLDER GENERATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS LARGELY TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES THAT LIBYA LOOKED TO TRAIN ITS FUTURE ADMINISTRATORS AND TECHNICIANS. HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS PARTICIPATED IN BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, AND AMERICAN PROFESSORS BEGAN TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF TRIPOLI AND BENGHAZI. A VIBRANT EDUCATIONAL LINK WAS THUS ESTABLISHED, AND ALTHOUGH THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND LIBYA SOURED FOLLOWING COLONEL QADHAFI'S SEIZURE OF POWER ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1969, THIS BOND HAS CONTINUED TO SURVIVE.

3. WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF FUNDS AT ITS DISPOSAL, THE NEW GOVERNMENT ACCELERATED ITS EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. THE UNIVERSITIES OF TRIPOLI AND BENGHAZI WERE DISBANDED, AND NEW ONES ARE NOW RISING IN THEIR PLACE. AMERICAN PROFESSORS CONTINUE TO BE RECRUITED, PARTICULARLY IN THE HUMANITIES, AND THERE ARE PRESENTLY OVER THIRTY SUCH TEACHERS AT THE TWO NEW UNIVERSITIES (GAR YUNIS NEAR BENGHAZI WITH 10,000 STUDENTS AND AL-FATAH UNIVERSITY NEAR TRIPOLI WITH 6,000).

4. GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS ALSO ABOUNDED AFTER 1969, AND AT PRESENT ANY YOUNG LIBYAN OF SUFFICIENT MENTAL CALIBER CAN STUDY AT HOME OR ABROAD THROUGH TO THE UNCLASSIFIED

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DOCTORATE LEVEL AT LIBYAN GOVERNMENT EXPENSE. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THIS LIBERAL PROGRAM IS VAST, AND IT IS ONCE AGAIN TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES THAT ALMOST 3,000 YOUNG LIBYANS HAVE LOOKED IN ORDER TO PURSUE VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES.

5. MOVEMENT IN THE CULTURAL FIELD HAS BEEN MUCH MORE FIRMLY CONSTRICTED, ESPECIALLY SINCE 1969. AS PART OF WHAT IS CALLED THE "THIRD UNIVERSAL THEORY" (FIRST TWO ARE COMMUNISM AND CAPITALISM), COLONEL QADHAFI HAS ELIMINATED ALL BUT THE PRETENSE OF PRESS AND LITERARY FREEDOM. THE ENTRY OF ALL PRINTED MATTER AND FILMS IS CAREFULLY CONTROLLED, AND GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT IS CONFINED TO OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS AND TO "POPULAR ART" WHICH GLORIFIES AND CONSECRATES THE "STRUGGLE OF THE LIBYAN MASSES TO OBTAIN COMPLETE FREEDOM."

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6. COLLATERAL WITH THIS RIGID CULTURAL PROGRAM HAS BEEN THE PURSUIT OF A "PAN-ARAB" FOREIGN POLICY WHICH OFTEN MAKES LIBYA ONE OF THE MORE VOCAL OPPONENTS OF U.S. FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC POLICY IN THE WORLD, GENERALLY, AND IN THE MIDDLE EAST, IN PARTICULAR.

7. THE OFTEN RADICAL STANCES WHICH LIBYA HAS ADOPTED ON SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES (I.E. PALESTINE, SOUTHERN AFRICA, AND NORTHERN IRELAND) HAVE BROUGHT LIBYA AND THE U.S. INTO DIRECT CONFRONTATION MORE THAN ONCE. THE PRECIPITATE CLOSURE OF WHEELUS AIR BASE IN 1972 AT THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST, AND LIBYA'S COVERT SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM AS AN ACTIVE POLICY TOOL HAVE FURTHER POISONED THE POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, AND SINCE 1972 DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAVE BEEN CONFINED TO THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES LEVEL.

8. INTO THIS ADMITTEDLY DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT, THE EMBASSY HAS SELECTED THREE SHORT-TERM AND ONE LONG-TERM COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES. THE FOREMOST SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE IS TO ESTABLISH THE RUDIMENTS OF A BILATERAL COMMUNICATIONS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBYA AND THE UNITED STATES. SECONDLY, THE EMBASSY IS STRIVING TO TARGET INDIVIDUALS AND GOVERNMENTAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH MIGHT (AND ARE PERMITTED) TO BENEFIT FROM PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THROUGH ICA. THIRDLY, THE EMBASSY HOPES TO USE ICA MATERIALS AS A LEVER TO GAIN

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SOME ACCESS TO THE GROWING UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY HERE WHICH WILL DOUBTLESSLY BE AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBYAN SOCIETY.

9. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE EMBASSY'S ONE LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE IS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE ABOVE AND CANNOT BE DEFINED IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC ISSUES AT THIS POINT IN TIME. INDEED, OUR LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE IS MORE A QUESTION OF CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH SPECIFIC AND VARIED ISSUES CAN BE ADDRESSED, CHALLENGED, AND DEBATED.

10. AT PRESENT THE EMBASSY OPERATES UNDER A VEIL OF SUSPICION WHICH PERMEATES EVERY CONTACT WE MAKE WITH LIBYANS IN GENERAL. OUR MOTIVES FOR STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNICATIONS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBYA AND THE U.S. IS OFFICIALLY CHALLENGED AND IS VIEWED BY THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT AS JUST ANOTHER ELEMENT OF THE ON-GOING ATTEMPT TO RE-ESTABLISH THE HEGEMONY OF WHAT ARE VIEWED AS THE "IMPERIALIST POWERS." OUR LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE, CONSEQUENTLY, IS TO BREAK THIS IMPRESSION AND TO OVERCOME THIS SUSPICION -- IN SHORT, TO CREATE AN AMENABLE COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT.

11. THIS OBJECTIVE WILL NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT A TACIT CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF OUR POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH LIBYA WHICH IS, OF COURSE, CONTINGENT ON FACTORS WHICH DO NOT ENTER INTO PLAY HERE. BUT DESPITE THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS, THE EMBASSY STRONGLY FEELS THAT ICA CAN PROVIDE SOME USEFUL TOOLS WHICH CAN ENABLE US TO AT LEAST BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR AN EVENTUAL NARROWING OF THE COMMUNICATIONS GAP. SOME OF THESE TOOLS AND THEIR PARTICULAR UTILITY AND LIMITATIONS MAY BE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

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A. VTR/CLASSIC FILM SERIES. WITH SUPPORT FROM ICA, THE EMBASSY LAST YEAR WAS ABLE TO PURCHASE TWO VTR UNITS AND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CLASSIC FILM SERIES. THESE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN WIDELY USED AND ARE SUPPORTIVE OF OUR SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES. ALTHOUGH ACCESS TO LIBYAN OFFICIALS IS DIFFICULT AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE VTR PROGRAMS AND THE CLASSICAL FILMS ARE REGULARLY SCREENED FOR THE BENEFIT OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND FOR THE CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF LIBYANS MARRIED TO FOREIGN WIVES WHO SEEM TO HAVE A SPECIAL LICENSE TO CIRCULATE AMONGST THE RESIDENT FOREIGN COMMUNITY. THIS HAS, IN TURN, PERMITTED EMBASSY OFFICERS TO HAVE SEMI-REGULAR CONTACT WITH A DYNAMIC GROUP OF OUTWARD LOOKING INDIVIDUALS OF THE TYPE WHO WILL HELP GUIDE THE LIBYA OF THE FUTURE. IN FY-79 AND FY-80, THE EMBASSY HOPES TO BROADEN THE SCOPE OF THIS PROGRAM AND TO ARRANGE SHOWINGS OF APPROPRIATE VTR'S AND FILMS BEFORE STUDENT AUDIENCES IN COOPERATION WITH UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS.

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B. INTERNATIONAL VISITOR PROGRAM. OF BOTH SHORT AND LONG-TERM IMPACT WOULD BE TRIPOLI PARTICIPATION IN THE ICA'S INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM UNDER WHICH THREE LIBYAN OFFICIALS A YEAR WOULD TRAVEL TO THE U.S. FOR AN ORIENTATION TOUR FOCUSED ON A SELECTED SECTOR OR FIELD. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EXCHANGE CANNOT BE OVER-EMPHASIZED. IN A COUNTRY WHOSE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS OFTEN HOSTILE TO THE U.S. AND WHICH WITNESSES THE ARRIVAL OF AN AVERAGE OF TWO SOVIET-BLOC DELEGATIONS PER WEEK, SUCH A PROGRAM COULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE PARTICIPANTS WHO COULD ONE DAY BECOME THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LEADERS OF THEIR COUNTRY.

C. AL-MAJAL. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT "AL-MAJAL" WOULD HAVE AN APPEAL TO LARGE NUMBERS OF EDUCATED LIBYANS. THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT RESTRICTS THE CIRCULATION OF FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS SUCH AS THIS, HOWEVER, AND WE DO NOT FORESEE THE POSSIBILITY OF DISTRIBUTING MORE THAN FIFTY COPIES PER MONTH AT THE PRESENT TIME.

D. STUDENT COUNSELING. THIS IS ONE AREA THE EMBASSY HAS DEVOTED ATTENTION TOWARDS, AND A SMALL BUT USEFUL CATALOGUE LIBRARY IS AVAILABLE IN THE CONSULAR SECTION TO ASSIST PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS. THIS LIBRARY MUST BE UP-DATED REGULARLY, AND ICA ASSISTANCE IN FORWARDING UNIVERSITY CATALOGUES IS SOUGHT. COUNSELING IS INFORMAL, BUT AN OPPORTUNITY IS OFFERED FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS
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TO CONSULT DIRECTLY WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER IF THIS IS SO DESIRED.

E. PRESENTATION BOOKS. THE EMBASSY IS AWAITING RECEIPT OF THE REMAINDER OF ITS FIRST ORDER OF PRESENTATION BOOKS. GIVEN THE LIMITED ACCESS TO WESTERN LITERATURE AND NON-FICTION OF ANY KIND HERE IN LIBYA, THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED A UNIVERSALLY POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM RECIPIENTS OF OUR INITIAL PRESENTATIONS, AND WE ENCOURAGE A SIMILAR BOOK PRESENTATION PROGRAM FOR FY-79 AND FY-80.

F. SPEAKER PROGRAM. THE IMPACT OF THE SPEAKER PROGRAM IN OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HAS BEEN PROVEN. NEVERTHELESS, THIS PROGRAM WILL NOT HAVE APPLICABILITY IN LIBYA UNTIL THE COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT HAS IMPROVED AND UNTIL ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITY FORUM CAN BE GUARANTEED.
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